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THE CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARD HIGH SCHOOL COMPOSITION

Submitted by
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(B. A., Clark University, 1923)

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INTRODUCTION

Scope and purpose of this study

In this study it is proposed to deal with the problem of composition teaching in the high school. Though doubtless much that will be said will be applicable to the teaching of oral composition, specific attention and mention will be given only to written composition. In general, no particular grade of composition teaching is to be selected for discussion, except in the sections dealing with suggested assignments, where attention will be confined to that of the twelfth grade. And throughout, it will be assumed that the term "high school" refers to the senior high school.

In this study it is proposed to proceed as follows:

First, to review the present status of the teaching of composition in the high school;

Second, to examine the relation between composition and other curriculum subjects, especially other phases of the teaching of English, as grammar, rhetoric, and literature;

Third, to examine present methods of teaching composition, and present textbook presentation;

Fourth, to indicate significant changes that are taking place in methods of teaching composition, and in textbook presentation;

Fifth, to suggest changes in texts and methods of composition teaching to meet changed conditions and to vitalize the teaching of composition.

I. Present status of teaching composition

In the practice of teaching there is today no more hopeful sign than the increased and increasing tendency to question why, what, and how we shall teach. It has too long been the mode to accept without question the time-worn, traditionally accepted ways of teaching that constitute our heritage from the Latin grammar school, early established in this country through British influence. Still is it possible to say that the dominant influence upon teaching in American secondary schools is that of the Latin grammar school. But the times are hopeful. One after another, not only the individual subjects of the traditional curriculum but the methods, or lack of methods, in teaching those subjects are coming under critical scrutiny. Not long ago, four years of Latin for the high school were accepted as a matter of course for all students. Today, as every one knows, not all students are even urged to take Latin for four years. Of those students not preparing for college only a few take any Latin at all; and even of those students preparing to go to college not all take Latin, or at least not four years of it. Though Latin serves as the outstanding example of the critical revision referred to above, other subjects are also under fire. In general, we are coming to see that the old theory of mental discipline and of transfer of training can no longer sustain the traditional curriculum and teaching methods. In the British Latin grammar school, from which our American secondary schools

are chiefly derived, instruction in the vernacular, that is, in the mother tongue, was not a subject of instruction. Through a study of Latin grammar, rhetoric, and composition, the student was expected to acquire proficiency in the speaking and writing of English. We might, therefore, with reason expect that American instruction in the English language would be freer of Latin-grammar-school influence than some other curriculum studies. But such is not, unfortunately, the case. Language instruction in our secondary schools has been for the most part modelled on instruction in Latin. Somehow, from a very highly formulized study of the principles of grammar and rhetoric, our students have in the past been expected to acquire proficiency in composition. Up to very recent date, the chief emphasis in language instruction has been placed on form, not on content or attitude. It is in this respect that the changes brought about by subjecting language teaching to critical scrutiny have been taking place.

It is obvious, of course, that the connection between the teaching of composition and the teaching of grammar is a very close one, and it will be selected for more careful examination later. But because they are so closely related, it may be of some interest here to refer to a phase of the study of the teaching of grammar as made a few years ago by Stormzand and O'Shea.(1) In their

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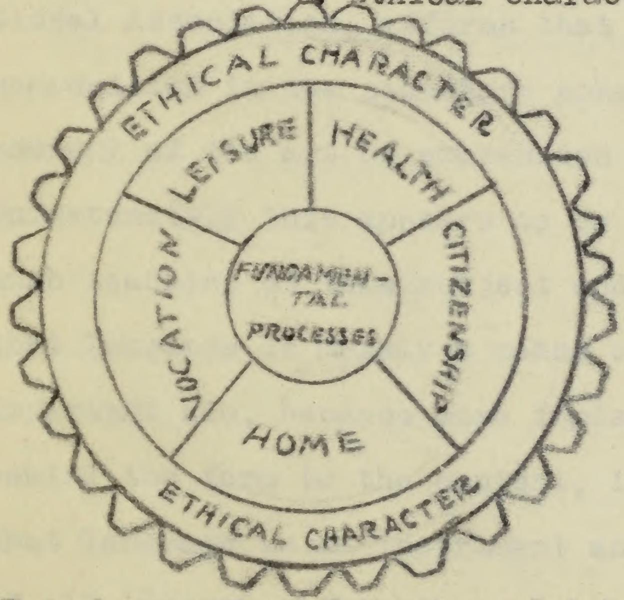
(1) HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Stormzand and O'Shea
Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

examination of ten language textbooks published from 1877 to 1918, they computed the percentage of total number of lines in each book given to technical grammar, to exercises, and to composition. The percentage of technical grammar drops from 100%, in 1877 and 1895, to 55%, in 1918. One book, published as late as 1911, contained 100% of technical grammar. The percentage of exercise material jumps from 17%, in 1877, to 51%, in 1918. Not until 1907 was there as much as 4% of composition material included in these texts. The book published in 1911 contained no composition material at all. The percentage of composition material jumps from nothing in 1877 to 37% in 1918.

An examination of textbooks published after 1900, which are specifically denominated as composition books, will demonstrate to any one that even these books are highly formalized in character, consisting very largely of abstract discussion of the principles of rhetoric and composition arranged in logical, but often far from useful or pedagogically efficient manner. The conventional method of approach to composition employed in these books will come up for more detailed discussion later in this study. They, and the findings of Stormzand and O'Shea given above, are introduced here in passing to demonstrate the extent to which the highly formalized and theoretical methods of the Latin grammar school still operate in the teaching of English language and composition in our secondary schools.

But the old order is changing. The fact (already demonstrated) that language books are today far less concerned with formal, technical grammar than they were scarcely a generation ago, is evidence of this change. And new objectives for composition teaching are everywhere being formulated. In general, aims and objectives for secondary education have been formulated, to the attaining of which, of course, language instruction must lend a hand. A sample of such is found in the aims listed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education.(1) These are seven in number, listed as follows:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Worthy home-membership
4. Vocation
5. Training for citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure
7. Ethical character.



In this visual representation, suggested by Prof. Edward J. Eaton, the cogs, which enable the wheel to do its work, are the various subjects in the curriculum. One of these cogs is English composition. In the new conception of educational aims, composition must justify its existence by contributing through as many segments as possible to complete living.

The above material is inserted here to show the kind of critical examination to which composition, together with

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(1) BUREAU OF EDUCATION BULLETIN, 1918, no. 35.

other curriculum subjects, is being subjected these days. Teachers of composition must show nowadays that their subject can contribute with other subjects to the attainment of vitalized educational objectives. That it has not so contributed in the past seems to be the conviction of progressive thinkers on the subject. That it must be so reorganized as to contribute its share of educational accomplishment is self-evident.

Other aims and objectives there are, more specifically concerned with composition. For instance, the ultimate objective of oral, written, and graphic expression must be "information of social value, the desire to express it, and the ability to add to the stock of information through investigation."(1) "The committee on the high-school course in English, representing the National Educational Association, affirms that the immediate aim of composition in the secondary school is 'to give the student command of the art of expression in speech and writing.' Unfortunately this appears to be the sole aim that controls much teaching of this subject and is based on the assumption that language is merely a means of communication. A more important aim, because more fundamental in that it goes behind the form to the content, is based on the supposition that language is an instrument and an essential condition of all important thinking. In the daily experience of the

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(1) SECONDARY EDUCATION, A.A. Douglass, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

individual, the use of language as an instrument of thought is naturally prior to its use as a medium of expression. Moreover, nearly all of the intellectual structures which support and carry our higher mental processes for us have been built up, since the race began to think, by the skillful use of language, and these structures have been preserved and transmitted by means of language....... From every point of view language is an instrument of thought..... The thought and the expression of it in actual practice are so closely interrelated that they act and react upon each other, moving along and developing together...... Thus instead of composition being fundamentally concerned with 'the art of expression' its primary aim is to cause pupils to grow in the power to use words as instruments of thought, the thought being the basic objective.

"If the aims of English composition here set forth are realized, there will be two results, one psychological, and the other linguistic: (1) Through his serious but natural effort to express himself accurately and adequately, there should come to the pupil a richer and better organized and controlled mental life, equipped with the accumulated tools of thought; and (2) on the concrete side, there should emerge a clearly and correctly 'composed' expression of the pupil's thoughts and feelings concerning an matter under consideration, such a verbal expression as is suited to the interests and capacities of his real or imaginary audience,

and measurably meeting the requirements of good form and finish."(1)

On this same matter Professor Julien Bezard, of the Lycee Hoche, Versailles, writes as follows. "Under another form of the old, yet ever-young Rhetoric, my Diary presents a new conception of its principles. We are trying - the class and I - to follow the laws of nature, to draw close to reality, to bring education and life nearer together. I want my pupils to live in the present rather than in the future; while I am shaping them for their adult years, I want them to realise that youth has its own value, that it is worthy to be lived in and for itself. I want them to discover the things that words stand for, the meaning and the living interest of what they learn, in order that they may carry with them some definite good from their studies, and be ready, the instant a thought is ripe, to act upon it. Two distinct aspects of this reality the school should make known to the pupils before they turn to an historical study of literature. The first is the world that lies about them every day, wherever their boyish pursuits lead them; the second is the world they have glimpses of in their books. The one speaks more particularly to eye and to ear, the other to imagination. Both appeal to judgment, to reason; both take for granted the ABC of rhetoric - analysis and synthesis." (2)

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

)2) MY CLASS IN COMPOSITION, Julien Bezard, translated by Phyllis Robbins, Harvard University Press, 1923

The foregoing samples of current discussion about the teaching of composition are evidence of the point that it is desired to make here. A new attitude toward the teaching of composition is arising, and is slowly bringing about a change in the practice of composition teaching, a change that is gradually finding reflection in the texts available for high school teaching. What these textbook changes are will be suggested later. Suffice it to say here that more and more is it desired in the teaching of composition to regard content rather than form as of primary importance. This means a shift of emphasis from the highly formalized grammatical and rhetorical instruction of yesterday to a conception of composition as an highly useful tool in the hands of students who go forth from the high school. It means that composition must be so taught as to be of actual service to the student not only in expressing himself, but in developing and organizing his thinking.

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II. Relation of Composition to Grammar and Rhetoric

It is obvious that if this newer conception of composition is to prevail in our schools, far less time can be devoted to the study of formal grammar and rhetoric than used formerly to be given them. It is now irrefutably established that disciplinary drill in these matters in and for themselves is next to useless. But this is not intended to mean that the study of grammar and of rhetoric shall be discarded. It simply means that the grammatical and rhetorical content of the English course must be thoroughly revised. Stormzand and O'Shea have attempted

to answer, in their study the following questions.

1. Just what phases of grammar does the typical American use in his every-day affairs?
2. In what respects does the typical graduate of the elementary or high school fail to meet the requirements of every-day life in regard to the use of grammar?

Of these questions they say, "When accurate data relating to these matters are before us, we can examine present-day practice in the schools in grammar-teaching, and we shall be in a position to suggest such eliminations, modifications, or additions, as may be required to meet the needs of daily life." "Many persons," they add, "are asking whether the science of grammar should be taught at all in the public schools. This is a pertinent question. In the present period of readjustment in the curriculum of the elementary and high schools, most of the older 'traditional' studies are under indictment. The off-hand answer of reformers in the case of grammar shows a tendency, developing rapidly, especially in the case of text-book makers, to eliminate 'formal' grammar. It is being dismembered as a body of scientific knowledge and offered to pupils piecemeal, with a lack of agreement as to the relative importance or order of the various topics; and, more significantly still, it is being taught 'incidentally' as a minor phase of language study." (1)

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(1) Stormzand and O'Shea, HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Baltimore, Warwick and York, 1924

"Again, many people are asking, 'Does the study of the rules and principles function in the child's use of language in every-day life?' 'Does a person who writes and speaks correctly know the science of grammar?' 'Is the person who speaks and writes incorrectly necessarily uninformed as to the rules of the science of speech?'

"Let us suppose for the moment that we have an affirmative answer to these questions, so that we may say that at least some grammar should be taught, and that its study will function, at least to some extent, in the use of language. Then the problem arises, What should be taught? What should be the content of the course in grammar? It is the purpose of the present investigation to seek an answer to these questions by a careful examination of the whole matter from two points of view:

1. What does present-day usage advise regarding the content of a grammar course?
    a) As shown by a study of a large mass of contemporary writing, ranging from the best types of classical prose to the ephemeral matter of the daily newspaper and 'light' fiction.
    b) As shown by a study of the written work of pupils in all grades from the sixth through the high school and college, and also letters and articles written by adults.
2. What does present-day need advise regarding the content of the grammar course; especially as determining the relative emphasis that should be given various topics?

a) This will take into consideration some previous studies that have been made by a number of investigators in the matter of persistent errors.

b) And will be supplemented by a careful examination of all the material used in 1 (above), with the expectation of showing, not merely the relative frequency of various errors, but of establishing for these errors what may be called 'Error Quotients' determined by using the frequencies of error for an individual or for a group as a numerator of a fraction, in which the denominator shall represent the chances for error in any particular grammatical usage.

To these will be added

3. A comparison of (1) and (2) with present-day practice in grammatical teaching, as indicated by the content of several leading language and grammar text-books."(1)

This study of Stormzand and O'Shea's comprises varying numbers of sentences from Macaulay, Stevenson, newspaper articles, compositions of university seniors, of university freshmen, of high school students, and of fourth to eighth grade students, from letters received by a women's magazine, from letters sent out by business men, from present-day "light fiction", and from newspaper editorials and magazine editorials.

From this study, so conducted, they arrived at certain conclusions of the utmost importance to the teacher of English.

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(1) Stormzand and O'Shea, HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

"Much of the traditional course in grammar may safely be relegated to an appendix in the text-book... Refinements of logical technique have no place in a course which has such an important function as the inculcating of correct habits of speech and writing, and which has so largely failed in its outcome because the time devoted to the subject has not been profitably employed. So much time has been taken on non-essentials in classification, analysis, and parsing that the important functional values could not be adequately emphasized."(1)

Here, then, is concrete evidence to support the view arrived at through guess-work by so many others. As Stormzand and O'Shea indicate (see pp. 3 & 4 above), much of formalized grammar has already disappeared from the text books, though, as they suspect, it has not been eliminated on a scientific basis. In the light of such a study as theirs it is clearly seen that the only justifiable relation between composition and grammar is a functional one. Nothing of grammar needs to be taught that cannot be shown to function in actual use. In short, the amount of grammar to be taught is determined by composition needs. What was the tail now wags the dog.

Stormzand and O'Shea would emphasize the following.

1. The Sentence:

   Distinction between simple, compound, and complex is fundamental. Maturing sentence use comes through qualification of thought, which demands this.

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(1) Stormzand and O'Shea, HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

Classification refinements as compound-complex may be disregarded. Distinctions as to meaning, such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory may also be disregarded.

2. The clause:

On a functional basis classification as adjectival, adverbial, and substantive is needless. The same applies to distinctions between uses of substantive and of adverbial clauses. The distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses is functionally important, as punctuation and clearness depend upon it.

3. Prepositional phrases:

These deserve study only for faults in diction in the use of the wrong prepositions.

4. Non-Modal Verb Forms:

Infinitives, gerunds, and participles are important, but the emphasis in studying them has been wrong. To distinguish the uses of the infinitive, and the constructions of the substantive infinitive is not justified. Materials referring to the split infinitive, the genitive case with the gerund, and the confusion of the past participle with the past tense repay emphasis much more.

5. Nouns:

Declension should be simplified and receive less time. The genitive case demands much attention.

Nominative of address and exclamation need not be distinguished; the punctuation they involve can be cared for in punctuation drill. The same holds true for appositives. Nouns as common, and abstract need not be distinguished, except that drill should be given on capitalizing proper nouns.

6. Pronouns:

Declension is warranted. Especially are the constructions of the accusative as direct object, object of a preposition, and subject of an infinitive to be given attention. Considerable emphasis on the agreement with their antecedents of relative and personal pronouns is warranted.

7. Adjectives:

Comparison of irregular adjectives demands considerable attention. Errors in the substitution of personal for demonstrative pronouns can be attacked wihtout wasting time on classification. Exercises to increase the use of pronominal adjectives should be employed.. Articles and numerals can be slighted.

8. Adverbs:

Irregular comparisons are all that warrant much time.

9. Conjunctions:

These can be neglected except as considered in connection with compound and complex sentences.

10. Verbs:

Conjugational complexities warrant much attention. The few forms commonly used are all of the subjunc-

tive that need attention. The non-future uses of shall and will warrant scant notice. The future of shall and will needs most attention. The future-perfect of shall and will os so rare that it can be neglected. Of all verbs, the present and past tenses should receive much attention. (1)

The relationship between composition and grammar has not lessened in importance as a result of the above recorded study, but is still a very essential one. Yet the closest and most effective relation can be established only by weeding out the useless parts of the traditional study of grammar as it has been blindly taught in the past. Much of the time thus shown to be wasted on formal grammar can much more profitably be employed in exercises to build up vocabulary, and to improve rhetorical usage.

Work with such a book as the Century Vocabulary Builder should come in for more attention. Printed exercises for use with at least one dictionary are available for classroom use. The teacher must welcome any exercise tending to increase pupil vocabulary. Such work must not, of course, take the form of a search for unusual words for their own sake. Any individual teacher can make for himself a study of the vocabulary habits of magazine-newspaper writers of today, and in that way set up for his teaching a goal to aim at. But however such work is

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(1) Stormzand and O'Shea, HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

carried out, it must be engaged in much more persistently than it has been in the past.

"Various studies that have been made tend to prove that the high school age is a time when the youth spontaneously tries to make his vocabulary larger and more discriminating. This 'strong pubescent instinct', as Hall calls it, begins to be especially manifest from thirteen to sixteen. With enlarging thought areas, a growing desire for self-expression and an instinctive tendency to 'show off', it is natural that there should be a strong desire to add to the power of expression. This desire to find increased means of expression shows itself in many ways, one of which is the early adolescent's fondness for slang. This fondness originates, according to Lounsbury, in his effort to 'say something more vividly, strongly, and concisely than existing language permits it to be said.' The conventional modes of expression do not satisfy, hence his use of slang and other piquant forms. But we must not conclude that the adolescent's appetite for new words and modes of expression is due to his desire for mere words as such, although sometimes it appears that way; he is primarily interested in words as instruments of thought and feeling." (1) In the high school years, then, not only is there a great need for increasing vocabulary, but an instinctive desire for that increase lying in wait for the teacher to capitalize it.

The reason why this increase is so greatly to be desired relates to the vitalized objectives of composition

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

already mentioned early in this study, and is found well expressed in the following. "The pupils should realise early that the correct and vigorous use of words is not only socially serviceable, but that their use has a high value when measured by its effect upon their intellectual powers. (a) Words come to be a substitute for direct experience; hence they are needed as a matter of economy. (b) Improved expression invariably leads to improved thinking, for thought and the expression of thought are but different and interdependent aspects of the same process. Every attempt at adequate expression sharpens the thinking and enriches the thought. Because this interplay of thought and expression and the natural results that flow from it minister to both the intellectual and social needs of the adolescent, the form of effort involved in composition should make a natural appeal." (1)

Equally important with the increasing of vocabulary is improvement in rhetorical usage. The same interest that urges the high school pupil on to increase his vocabulary can in large measure be utilized to send him seeking better and more varied ways of expressing his thoughts. To a certain extent the mere possession of an increased vocabulary will lead to improved thought expression. It is the perennial complaint of high school teachers that so much composition work is so technically perfect that a large percentage of high grades is unavoidable. It is not here desired, of course,

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

to disparage the giving of high grades where they are deserved, nor to intimate that the teacher ought always to watch for chances to give lower grades. But something censurable is at the bottom of this plaint. The teacher writhes at the apparent necessity of giving top-notch grades to work that he knows is far from what it ought to be; and the complaint is the result of a failure to recognize wherein the trouble lies. Some teachers, it is true, do realize that there is trouble, though they cannot give it a name, for these will admit that they complain thus because they feel that if this apparent correctness in so much composition work is the highest level their teaching can achieve they are not really justifying their existence. They know that it is a mediocre level, yet they cannot seemingly push or pull their classes above it, and so they go on complainingly giving high marks for work that achieves it. Such work consists for the most part of rather simply written work done with commendable correctness. But once in a while comes a student who amazes the teacher by the excellence of his composition work, even though as regards spelling and punctuation, and even grammar, it may fall below the standard against which he has been railing. He may often be puzzled over the basis of his recognition of superior workmanship. But if he would stop to analyze a bit he might find a name for the trouble which lies at the bottom of his complaint. The superiority of this rare student's work lies in the maturity of his style. It is the kind of work that the teacher wishes he could hold himself responsible for. This

student's maturity of style lies in his use of more involved sentences, probably of complex sentences. Why does he use more complex sentences? The answer to that question lays bare the whole matter. He uses more complex sentences because his thinking is of a higher order than that employed by most of his fellows. Those mediocre themes that had to be given high grades for technical correctness never ventured out of the shallow waters of relatively simple sentences. No wonder they were correct. Their writers never attempted sentences that involved many chances for serious errors. They either did no thinking that required complexity of sentence structure, or they "played safe" and refused to take a chance with any other type of sentence than that which involved no very great risks. Where the fault lies for such a common and lamentable situation is in itself a complex matter. Suggestions as to how it may be remedied will be discussed later under methods. But it may be said here that all too often the fault is the teacher's in having held over the heads of his class the club of correctness, till his class had rather give up trying to take intellectual flights than feel that club descend on their heads. The teacher has failed to stimulate his students to think. He has forgotten that mere correctness is not an end in itself, that the ultimate and worthy end of composition teaching is the ability to think reflectively and discriminatingly. He has failed to realize the vital connection between rhetoric and composition, for it is in no small measure through rhetorical study that the capacity for thought and the expression of it come.

III. Composition as related to literature:

The relation of composition to literature is here to be considered from two points of view, from that of the common association of the two in a great majority of schools, and from that of the actual, or intrinsic, relation between the two.

It is probably safe to say that in almost 90 out of every 100 high schools no curriculum distinction is made between composition and literature. Both are listed together under the same designation of "English"; they are presented to the same groups, in the same rooms, by the same teachers. In general two methods of thus associating the two are followed. One is called the "block" system, and the other is called the "synchronous" system. By the first of these, the "block" system, a certain period of time, varying with the particular arrangement of the school year in a given town, is devoted to composition exclusively, and following that a corresponding period of time is given to literature exclusively. By the second of these two, the "synchronous" system, composition and literature are both taught every day, or at least on alternate days.

Before the relative merits of these two systems can be discussed, the second aspect of the relationship between composition and literature must be examined. If this relationship is a close and intimate one, then the prevailing tendency not to distinguish in curricula between the two is justified. The primary appeal of literature is

to the feelings and the imagination; that of composition to the intellect. The aim of composition is to stimulate expression and reflective thinking, but certain forms of composition also appeal to and stimulate the imagination. In this matter of imagination it is evident that composition and literature have at least one point common to both. In respect to presentation, the technique of teaching literature is the technique of appreciation. Though to some extent appreciation may enter into the teaching of composition, it is far from being what could be called the principal technique involved in presenting that subject. Drill does, and should, play a large role in the teaching of composition, but it has no place in the teaching of literature. Composition may be very effectively, and of late years is more and more frequently, placed on a problem basis. Often it is in part placed on a project basis. Now neither of these two methods has a place in the teaching of literature. (The now generally outmoded practice of drill in parsing and sentence analysis through literature is here disregarded.) It is fairly obvious, therefore, that except where they touch in the matter of imagination, composition and literature have almost nothing in common from the points of view of both aim and technique.

"Because language and literature are often taught by the same teacher and to the same class and grouped under 'English' in the various curricula, their aims are not always definitely distinguished, and there

results an unfortunate failure to discriminate as to the values appropriate to each subject and the methods best suited to the character of each. Professor Inglis does not overstate their difference: 'However the two fields of study may correlate in teaching, however much they may depend upon and contribute to each other, the values, aims, and mthods of the two studies are as widely separate as any two studies in the program.'" (1)

When literature and composition are associated in the teaching process, the association is almost always an artificial one, ill-adapted to meeting the real needs of the students in either field. Pringle, following Inglis, notes the necessary and helpful distinction between the educational values of production and accomplishment on the one hand, and, on the other, the educational values of consumption, utilization, and appreciation. (1) The first pertain to composition, and the second to literature. Mingling the two confuses and even loses sight of these educational values. Few students, Hughes Mearns (2) to the contrary notwithstanding, will find in literature values of production and accomplishment; few will produce writing of literary value. If (at least for the majority of students) the truth of the foregoing is admitted, then composition and literature, properly taught, acquire an attitude each

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

(2) CREATIVE YOUTH, Hughes Mearns, Doubleday, Page, 1926

towards literature that differs radically from the other. The class in literature regards the material studied from the point of view of inspiration and appreciation. The class in composition, if it regards literature at all (and this is not to say that it should not), regards it from a point of view of analysis. For a joint class in composition and literature to regard the same items of literature from the analytical point of view for composition purposes would be - in fact, is - fatal to their value for appreciation as literature alone. The composition-class attitude spoils literature, as such, for by far the great majority of high school students.

In the greater number of high schools the exigencies of teaching staff and curriculum make nearly impossible the setting up of separate classes, with different teachers, for composition and for literature. In the light of the above discussion, it would seem best in such schools to adopt the "block" system of teaching these two subjects, since - to recapitulate - classes in these subjects differ so widely in content, teaching technique, and attitude. Certainly, it would seem extremely unwise to attempt to split class periods between the two subjects. And to devote alternate days to composition and to literature is apt to result in confusion on the part of the students and in an uneconomical dissipation of effort on the part of the teacher. Under such conditions, neither composition nor literature receives the proper pupil- or teacher-attention. If it is at all possible, a separation of classes and teachers for each should be made.

IV. Composition as related to other curriculum studies:

It is all to frequently the source of continual complaint on the part of non-English teachers that the work in English is given too large a place in the curriculum and demands a disproportionate amount of time of the students. This complaint is, let it be frankly admitted, in part justified. But, on the other hand, the very fact that few non-English teachers see, or at least admit, the value to their own subjects of English work, shows that they fail to recognize the all-embracing important of English in the school and extra-school lives of their students. Their complaint is justified to this extent, that as yet not many English teachers have availed themselves of the opportunities open to them for correlating their teaching with that of other departments. In larger measure, the possibilities for impressing non-English teachers with the importance of the English work and for correlating English work with that of other departments lie in the special field of composition.

"There is much duplication and working at cross-purposes between composition and other classes. A possible remedy for the situation is to assign to composition the task of teaching correct form, leaving it to other sources to supply content. Under this plan a pupil could, for example, write a paper on 'Engineering as a Career' for his class in vocational civics and hand that paper to both his civics teacher and his composition teacher. Content would be the problem in one class; the expression in the other.

Composition teachers would be relieved of one of their greatest problems - that of suggesting theme subjects; their teaching should be more effective, since it is general improvement in expression that is desired, not improvement in English classes only." (1) Professor C.S.Thomas, in his book, (2) urges teachers to make use of other studies in the curriculum. As one device, he suggests translation from a foreign language. Often, too, if a teacher of composition will acquaint himself with the hobbies and avocational interests, and the future vocational intentions of his students, he can stimulate students to write upon these topics so close to their affections, and can enlist, or have students enlist, the aid of non-English teachers in working up material. Historical subjects, Mr. Thomas suggests, provide specially interesting material for such work.

All such endeavor on the part of the teacher of composition serves a double purpose. It not only supplies the student with interesting material, but demonstrates to the student the validity of composition work outside the English classroom. Moreover, from the teacher's point of view, it serves to heal the breach of feeling, referred to above, between himself and non-English teachers.

Another phase of this relationship between the English and the non-English studies has to do with written work performed primarily for non-English classes. In

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(1) SECONDARY EDUCATION, A.A.Douglass, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

(2) THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL, C.S.Thomas, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

his discussion of ways of securing effective cooperation between the English and the other departments, Professor Thomas brings out, among other things, the following suggestion. "Teachers of other departments should hand to the English teachers papers or notebooks in which the English is either markedly deficient or markedly proficient. When the various departments are cooperating with regard to the use of language, each pupil is influenced throughout his work by the two incentives of hope and fear - hope that his English in all classes will raise his English rating, fear that it will lower it. And in marking for the semester the English teacher should take cognizance of these merits and these defects. The result of all this will be a constant training, throughout the school, in the proper use of language.

"Teachers in other departments should freely commend those pupils whose written or oral English they find exceptionally good. Such a practice would aid in improving the tone of English in the entire school..... The explicit note of praise may unconsciously arrest many implicit errors.....

"In selecting or retaining teachers, the school authorities should carefully consider each individual's ability to use oral and written English..... The English of the entire school is the business of the entire school."(1)

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(1) THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL,
C.S.Thomas, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

If further evidence is needed to support the foregoing point of view, there is Rollo Brown's note (1) that the French boy is marked on his language in the notebooks of all courses. The French, judged by Brown's book and by Bezard's Diary,(2) seem to be far ahead of American schools in instruction in the vernacular. That they have discovered among school pupils the value for raising the standard of language of insisting on a high level of writing in all departments, is all the more reason why we should adopt the same practice.

This matter, then, of interrelating English composition with other curriculum studies is a responsibility that devolves alike upon the English teacher and the non-English teacher. In particular is it important for the English teacher to realize unmistakably that the composition he teaches is not an elaborate set of refinements to be restricted to the English classroom. He must see to it that he takes measures to insure that his students come to realize that their composition is something that is universally applicable and valuable. Whatever the steps undertaken to cooperate with other departments, he must recognize that the initiative must be his. He will be fortunate if he finds other teachers (over-burdened like himself) who are willing to follow his suggestions, and a principal who will set up the needed machinery; but he will have to make the first move, if anything is done at all.

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(1) HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE, R.W.Brown, Harvard University Press, 1922

(2) MY CLASS IN COMPOSITION, Julien Bezard, translated by Phyllis Robbins, Harvard University Press, 1923

The preceding sections of this study have attempted the task of demonstrating that

a) as never before, the teaching of composition is undergoing critical scrutiny from those who are interested in progressive educational methods;

b) the teaching of composition has been found wanting in attitude, methods, and teaching material;

c) under the stimulus of adverse criticism, and in keeping with the newer educational policies of the present day, teachers of composition are seeking to formulate definite objectives for teaching their subject;

d) the core of these objectives now formulating is the conception of composition as a practical tool in the hands of students for engaging in not just correct self-expression, but more importantly in reflective thinking;

e) in the light of new objectives, much of formal, technical grammar, practically all of the finely shaded distinctions of such grammar, must be discarded, not only because they have been shown not to function in composition habits, but also because time once devoted to them is needed for more important matters; particularly rhetorical matters;

f) as complete a divorcing of composition from literature as possible must take place in the classroom;

g) the closest possible relationship must be maintained between composition and other curriculum studies, not only for the sake of composition itself, but that through composition English work in general may justify the important position it holds in the high school curriculum.

V. Methods of presenting composition:

Because these important changes are taking place, it becomes necessary that the textbooks, the methods, the supplementary aids, the motivation, and the types of assignments employed by teachers of composition should undergo examination. It shall, therefore, be the task of the succeeding sections of this study at least to suggest phases of this examination, together with some results to be desired from it.

A. Textbooks:

The advertizing material that in great quantity reaches the English teacher through the mails every year, and the catalogues of educational publishers give evidence of the multiplicity of textbooks on the market for the use of the teacher of composition. It almost seems as though every other teacher, supervisor, principal, and college professor at one time or another has taken pains to write such a text. Two general observations may safely be made with regard to this flood of material. First, the great majority of them are as alike as peas in a pod; they seem

so many of them to have been based on some classically established textbook as a model. Second, far too many of them are practically worthless; they consist of cut-and-dried, logically arranged materials of a highly theoretical sort. Too often their makers are men and women, once active teachers, but now executives and administrators, who have written merely to capitalize their reputations, or who have largely lost touch with actual classroom practice, so that in either case their books are worthless to the active teacher. Not infrequently a book is the result of highly individual experience on the part of some successful and still active teacher, but proves to be, on trial by others, so peculiarly the product of its author's own teaching situation as to be inadaptable to their needs. But,, with an increasing number of welcome and commendable exceptions, the fault by and large with this flood of texts lies in the theoretical nature and artificiality of their arrangement - however logically complete it may be.

Such an arrangement ought by this time to be familiar to every one. The following is typical.

Chapter I.	The Parts of Speech
Chapter II.	Phrases
Chapter III.	Clauses
Chapter IV.	Sentences
Chapter V.	The Whole Composition
Chapter VI.	Exposition

Chapter VII. Description

Chapter VIII. Narration

Chapter IX. Argumentation

To these may be added some supplementary chapters on Letter Writing, School Journalism, and the like, in a feeble attempt to bring their books up to date.

In most of these books the chapters dealing with parts of speech, phrases, and clauses are simply reduction chiefly by guess-work of the older, formal grammar books. Most of this material, as this study has already attempted to show, is of very slight or even no value for composition achievement. The chapters dealing with the four divisions of composition into exposition, description, narration, and argumentation usually consist of an exposition of the theoretical principles underlying that form of writing, interspersed with exercises calling upon the student to write upon one of a list of titles or topics according to these principles. Rarely indeed is there any but a very slight indication that these four divisions are not mutually exclusive. The student is expected at one time to write pure exposition, and at another pure description. Is it any wonder that, approaching composition through such books, students fall into the error of regarding it as a kind of drudgery especially designed by the powers that be to take up their school time, and that they hate it like poison and never consider taking it outside the classroom where it tortures them?

Of the above type of book and arrangement of presentation, Pringle comments as follows.

"The natural order evidently is not words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and whole compositions, as we find in the old books. This organization is neither logical nor psychological. The purpose and spirit of the whole must settle everything concerning words, sentences, and paragraphs, and at the same time the purpose and spirit must control and animate the thought movement. Unless purpose alone controls, we can be sure of no vital unity or coherence."

"Although educators are now pretty well agreed that the primary and most important function of the composition teacher is to stimulate and guide the thinking and the organization of thought, the older textbooks and much of the present teaching place the chief emphasis upon the way ideas are to be expressed, thus ignoring the fact that for the adolescent content is always more important than form, and disregarding the principle that in all true art the content must determine the form." (1)

There are hopeful signs that the changing conception of the teaching of composition is bringing about a corresponding change in the writing of textbooks. But makers of these books show that they are still loath, while trying to take into account the newer objectives, to foreswear the traditional classification of composition as to types. One textbook, at least, throws overboard the whole

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

of this traditional classification, and does not even mention the fact that at any given point in the composition course, the student is being called upon to write exposition or description. Instead, it adopts such headings of a functional nature as"Helping others to see". Nor does this book devote its earlier chapters to a review of grammar, but places between sections of the book exercises for catching up typical errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. From the very outset, the student is asked to focus his attention upon the accomplishment of some definite problem that involves compositional effort. He is stimulated to exercise his five senses and all his thinking powers. And he is given a wide variety of problems to choose from, problems that touch on his own every-day interests and experiences.

To such texts as these the older ones must surely give way. Until there are enough of them to meet the individual preferences of teachers, teachers must exercise their own ingenuities to pilot their classes to real achievement in composition.

B. Supplementary aids to composition:

It has been asserted above that the amount of time and attention given heretofore to the study of formal grammar must be cut down considerably in order to allow for attention to matters that function more patently in actual composition habits, These matters are largely rhetorical ones. And their purpose must be to increase that complexity of sentence structure the deplorable and

all too general lack of which has already in this study been deplored. But thus to advocate increasing attention to rhetorical considerations is not to recommend at the same time neglect of grammar. In the light, however, of the findings of Stormzand and O'Shea, previously reviewed, teachers can no longer regard grammar as of value in and for itself. They must introduce it in their teaching only to the extent to which it will function in improving the composition habits of their classes. The grammatical topics and the approximate relative emphasis that must be put upon them in teaching, as stated by Stormzand and O'Shea, see pp. 13 to 16 above), have already been incorporated into this study. To those recommendations it is necessary only to add that the time for introducing into the course of study any given grammatical topic must be determined on a basis of the observed composition habits of a particular group of students. Every teacher must repeatedly check up the progress of his class not only in grammar but in other matters as well, such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. As to grammar, any teacher can easily construct and have mimeographed a test which will roughly measure the ability of his class to handle any of the topics among the Stormzand and O'Shea minimum essentials. Such a test serves as a very valuable guide for introducing and regulating the emphasis upon the various topics in grammar. No good teacher, of course, follows any program so absolutely rigidly that it will not

permit of variation to meet exigent needs. Such teachers, keeping a watchful eye on their students' work, will often find occasion in any day's work to bring up some grammatical topic for special consideration. So much, then, for grammar in the composition course.

But if really effective work is to be done in the teaching of composition, much attention must be paid to exercises of a rhetorical nature intended to increase the student's control of the sentence, and especially to get him to use sentences that express more finely and accurately shaded meanings and better qualified thoughts.

One matter, so obvious to the teacher as to be slighted in treatment, pupils are often unaware of, or at best vaguely aware of. This is that different kinds of clauses vary as to the weight in thought carried. It is amazing to an inexperienced teacher to find how few pupils realize this difference as between independent and dependent clauses, and the relation of this difference to the thoughts they desire to express.

A pictorial device that is of help in impressing upon pupils the uses of these clauses in constructing sentences to express their thoughts is given below. As a preliminary to putting the device on the board, it is well to give the pupils practice in recognizing from sentences put before them independent and dependent clauses, that they may know with what elements of the sentence they are dealing in the blackboard representation.

Following this practice, the teacher puts the graphical representation on the board. Specific attention must be called to the fact that the size of the squares indicates the relative WEIGHT or IMPORTANCE of the thought expressed.

□ - an INDEPENDENT or MAIN clause

▫ - a DEPENDENT or SUBORDINATE clause

□ - a SIMPLE sentence, of one INDEPENDENT thought

□ □ - a COMPOUND sentence, of two EQUALLY important thoughts, so closely related as to make one sentence

□ ▫ - a COMPLEX sentence, of one CHIEF thought and one LESS important thought to help to make it clear

□ ▫ ▫
□ □ ▫
□ ▫ □ ▫

These are other possible combinations of □ and ▫ .

The pupils are asked to copy the above into their notebooks. Then the teacher proceeds as follows. "How should you represent a sentence that contains two equally important thoughts?" Then when it is represented, he asks,

"What names should you give to these squares?" Or, "How should you represent a sentence that contains one most important thought, and two less important or helping thoughts?" And then, "What names should you give to these squares?" And so on, giving the pupils practice in deciding what kinds of sentences they should use to express thoughts of varying importance, without their having actually to write such sentences.

Such exercises enforce upon the students' minds that the difference between independent and dependent clauses is one of importance. If they are told that the thoughts expressed by means of the independent clauses, the chief thoughts, are those to which a writer wishes to call the greatest attention, and if they are asked to demonstrate that this is so from sentences given them for study, they can easily be led to think of this calling attention to differing importance as a matter of emphasis.

When this, the biggest distinction in emphasis, is firmly grasped, students can be led to consideration of subtler degrees of emphasis as shown in the structure of the sentence. First, from sentences, they must be given practice in identifying modifying words (adjectives and adverbs) and modifying groups of words, or phrases (adjective and adverb), without being asked to distinguish in either case between adjective and adverb. It is not difficult to get them to see that what is expressed by means of these modifying words and phrases is of still less importance or weight in the sentence than that expressed by dependent

clauses. And a few examples will suffice to point out that the modifying word is of less importance or weight than the modifying phrase. Asked to decide which of two expressions, "the blue cloth" and "the cloth of blue", gives greater emphasis to, or stresses more, the item of color, they will after a little practice be able to say that the second, which employs a phrase, gives it the greater degree of emphasis.

Then comes the time to give them a skeleton outline of the ascending degrees of structural qualification. This is not intended to be memorized, but is merely to be copied into notebooks and kept for reference in subsequent rhetorical study. The following outline is the suggestion of Professor E.A.Post, of Boston University College of Business Administration.

S - subject; P - predicate;
(adj) - adjective; (adv) - adverb;
(phr) - adjective or adverbial phrase, depending on use;
(cls) - adjective or adverbial clause, depending on use.
(Arrangement is in ascending order.)

1. S plus P
2. S plus (adv)P
3. (adj)S plus P
4. (adj)S plus (adv)P
5. S plus (phr)P
6. (phr)S plus P
7. (adj)S plus (phr)P
8. (phr)S plus (adv)P

9. (phr)S plus (phr)P
10. S plus (cls)P
11. (cls)S plus P
12. (adj)S plus (cls)P
13. (phr)S plus (cls)P
14. (cls)S plus (adv)P
15. (cls)S plus (phr)P
16. (cls)S plus (cls)P

With regard to the teaching of clauses, Stormzand and O'Shea make the following recommendation. "Language exercises should be carefully graded with a view to teaching pupils of various grades how to build up sentences containing clauses of various types... It would seem (of phrases) that in the grades and early high school period exercises might well be worked out to increase the use of the adjectival phrase modifier... It would seem that exercises of this sort might be built up by giving the pupil single-word adjective modifiers to work over into adjectival phrases. Or direct exercises might be assigned which would require the pupil to add phrase modifiers to nouns and pronouns in model sentences put before them... There is strong reason for emphasis on the use of participial modifiers, not only throughout the high school, but even in English work in the university. The value of the participle as a means of attaining clear and concise expression is well-known." (1)

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(1) HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Stormzand and O'Shea, Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

From the foregoing it is natural to turn next to a consideration of the nature of exercises to develop greater maturity in sentence structure. Again Stormzand and O'Shea make helpful comment. "One point may be stressed here; merely learning facts about the classification of sentences, and acquiring ability to apply this knowledge in the ready analysis and parsing of sentences has been tried, and must be admitted to have failed. Another method, the mastery by composition, is now being generally emphasized and must be given a fair trial. Devices in teaching must be worked out to induce the pupil to write and speak thoughts expressed in correct, varied, and versatile sentence form. Two general lines of attack seem possible... Such exercises will usually take on one of two forms, restatement of condensed material in amplified form, or restatement of amplified material in condensed for. We should make use of exercises involving the restatement of words in natural, equivalent phrases; of the restatement of phrases in clauses; of the recasting of simple sentences into compound and comples, and vice versa; and of the recasting of complex sentences of one type into those of another." (1)

Part of the above recommendations involve what is known as precis writing, and will be considered presently. But beforehand it is in order to suggest exercises dealing just with sentences. It is in such work that the outline of degrees of structural qualification comes in handy as a guide to refer to constantly. A good beginning is to put

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(1) HOW MUCH ENGLISH GRAMMAR? Stormzand and O'Shea, Baltimore, Warwick & York, 1924

before the class some broad, general statement, and then to question them about it. It will be at once evident to them that this statement is not completely and universally true. Out of questioning will come certain modifications of this general statement that must be added to it before it can be taken as in any real respect representing the truth. At first these thoughts should need only perfectly obvious qualification. But after the class has caught on, qualifications that require real thinking on the part of the class can be attempted. Such work will serve the double purpose of stimulating the mental processes, and of leading the class into the use of more complex but orderly sentences. And, very importantly, it links up together in the minds of the students the process of reflective thinking and the use of complex sentences.

It has been said above that all too often high school students stick to the safe, short sentence without much qualification. They do this under teachers who have misguidedly placed mere correctness on such an exalted level that students fear most to fall short of it. If, however, mere correctness is not thus apotheosized, but no training in thinking and sentence structure such as the foregoing is given, another tendency develops, which this very same training will correct while it capitalizes the adolescent impulses that bring about the condition. Indeed, such training in structural qualification in its relation to thinking is the only kind of training that both effectually corrects inherent adolescent traits and makes use

at the same time of natural impulses characteristic of adolescents.

"As with vocabulary enlargement, the time is ripe for a decided advance in sustained thinking and more developed structure. According to Hall (ADOLESCENCE) 'The sentence is affected by the more voluminous mentation of the teens. It seems always to grow longer and more intricate and sometimes to become for a time inordinately involved....... Often there is oscillation between different types of construction...'.... 'The long sentences at this age are highly involved and complex, as if many mental items were struggling for suggestion but tended to break down old limits.' (Hancock) Thus, as with vocabulary development, the psychology of the sentence is encouraging." (1)

It thus becomes imperative that the up-to-date teacher of composition employ exercises of the type suggested for the maturing of sentence control. If he does nothing, he students will naturally wander in the mazes of long and intricate sentences. If he sees in this tendency of theirs only that they are committing gross errors in structure and if he then sets up correctness as the summum bonum, he will get nothing but short, simple, childish sentences from them, which will not represent any real degree of thinking, and which will make him wonder why his students' work seems so puerile.

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

Other extremely valuable types of exercises there are to which the teacher of composition may turn his hand to great profit. The teacher may select from some reputable essayist a paragraph of material and turn it into simple sentences. These simple sentences are then given to the class with instructions to turn them into compound and complex sentences. Such an exercise involves the careful weighing of one thought against another for the purpose of securing just the right shading of emphasis, and has the added advantage of giving the class some real material to deal with. At discretion, the teacher may or may not afterwards confront them with the original text.

A somewhat more artificial, but none the less valuable, exercise consists in the substitution of one type of construction for another. Pupils are amazed with the possibilities of a single sentence for varied construction. Clauses can be reduced to phrases, phrases to single-word modifiers, and vice versa - all producing different shadings of meaning and emphasis. Similar to this is an exercise involving the choosing between a number of sentences differently constructed but all developing the same original idea. Miss Wilson (1) employs a device that she calls the 'logical subject' for aid in such work. This logical subject presents the topic or core-thought that each of a group of sentences is

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(1) THE FUNCTION AND MECHANISM OF THE SENTENCE,
Esther Wilson, A.A.Knopf, 1926

supposed to develop. With this as a touchstone of judgment, the students are asked to determine which of the group of sentences best expresses or develops this topic. Miss Wilson also uses this device in connection with exercises in detecting faulty emphasis in a group of sentences, all supposedly developing the same logical subject. An important result of this last mentioned exercise is that it enables students to see the error involved in so many of their own sentences, which put into subordinate clauses or into phrases matters that should be put into coordinate clauses, or vice versa.

All such work as that described or suggested in the previous paragraphs is far more valuable from the point of view of actual functioning in the composition habits of high school students than almost all of the traditional formal, theoretical grammar, which has in the past occupied so much time in the English classroom.

Recommendations of Stormzand and O'Shea have already been quoted (p. 41) which involve what at the time was noted as precis work. Within the last few years, this type of exercise has come into rapidly increasing prominence in American schools, and for a longer time has been a widely used procedure in English schools. This work has value equally great for the interpretation of literature and for concise, effective sentence building. But it will be here considered only in the latter connection. The illustration is taken from C.S.Thomas's book (1) on the

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(1) THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL,
C.S.Thomas, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

teaching of high school English. "A group of students are told, first, to read this paragraph from the opening chapter of Moreaux's text:

> 'A mere star amongst innumerable sisters, the Sun is, like them, endowed with a movement of its own, the speed of which, according to recent calculations, is about a dozen miles a second. Like the stars, too, our Sun has passed through different phases; it has been evolving since the time when it was like thousands of nebulae which telescopes have brought within the range of our vision, and shone with a diffused glow. The laws of condensation have gradually brought it to the condition in which we see it today; and in the millions of years which are still ahead, it will have to pass through new stages and will slowly advance along the road that leads to death, for the sky is full of out-worn stars whose vital throbbings are gradually growing feebler until they roll at last, dark and cold, through stellar space.'

They are then asked to write a precis of the paragraph. And a precis, they already understand, is a summary, an abstract, a condensation, written in good diction, with clear, closely articulated sentences. It must contain all the essentials of the original; it must convey the same general message and emphasis; it may delete only those ideas which are of minor importance. They are told that their results will be marked in one of three ways:
(a) right; (b) wrong; (c) inadequate.

"As a result of our assignment we should probably get from our students some such examples as the following:

Precis A. Like the rest of the stars and planets, the sun has also evolved from a nebulous form, but it has gained a far more rapid speed than the rest. It will gradually slow down its motion of a dozen miles a second, die, and roll at last, dark and cold, through stellar space; but the other stars will remain stationary.

Precis B. Telescopes are instruments that have revealed the diffused glow of thousands of nebulae that are in the sky. These nebulae will pass through changes and will slowly advance along the road toward death, for the sky is full of out-worn stars whose life has gradually grown feebler and feebler.

Precis C. The sun, like its sister stars, has a movement of its own, its probable speed being twelve miles a second. Like them, too, it has gradually condensed from a glowing nebulous state to its present one. As the ages bring new changes, it will finally die and, with the other out-worn stars, roll dark and cold through space.

Precis D. The sun, in contradistinction to the other stars, has a rapid movement. It has evolved from a nebulous form to its present state where it will, through all subsequent ages, continue - through the millions of years which are before us - to roll through stellar space at the rate of twelve miles a second.

Precis E. There are many, many stars. Each has a motion of its own. Many of them in the long process of time, obeying all the while the inescapable laws of change, have lost their life and now roll, dark and cold, with their companions through the realms of stellar space.

"A close examination of these precis shows us that only one of them - the third - is satisfactory. Comparing Precis A with the original paragraph, we discover two misstatements: the author did not say that the sun had attained a greater speed than that of the sister stars; nor did he say that the other stars would remain stationary. We must mark this wrong.

"Precis B throws undue emphasis upon the definition of telescopes. Moreover, it says nothing specific about the sun and its relationship to the other stars. The statements made are true in themselves, but since they omit the major item of the sun, they are as a whole inadequate. The entire precis is out of perspective.

"The main fault in Precis D is, of course, the misstatement in the first sentence. The opening words of the original draw specific attention to the similarity between the motion of the sun and of the stars - a similarity which the writer of Precis D coolly denies. We therefore mark it wrong.

"It is apparent, then, that the only one of these precis which we can designate as right is Precis C. This contains no misstatements which are untrue to the original. It creates no false emphasis. The ideas it omits are all minor and somewhat casual. It conveys adequately the message of the original. All this does not mean that it could not be improved. It simply means that the author's thought has been correctly interpreted and adequately expressed. We accordingly judge Precis C as satisfactorily meeting the demands of the assignment." (1)

On the compositional side precis writing is very valuable in that it requires

a) first and foremost, thinking;

b) evaluation of the author's sentence structure to determine just what he wished to emphasize;

c) careful construction of concise sentences carrying just the correct degree of emphasis;

d) through condensation, the substitution, wherever possible, of shorter constructions for the original longer ones; and

e) the frequent use of complex sentences, the form of which is determined by the thought.

Related to these various means of securing more mature and complex sentence structure is that of dictation. Rollo Brown notes that dictation plays an important part in

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(1) THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL, C.S.Thomas, Houghton, Mifflin, 1927

the composition training of the French student. It is valuable because

a) it gives practice in sentence handling;

b) it places emphasis on grammatical constructions;

c) it makes for enlargement of vocabulary and for practice in employing words already known;

d) it provides standards of good speech to fill the mind of the student;

e) it helps to prevent the separation of the spoken from the written language. (1)

C. Motivation of composition:

Just as important, certainly, as any consideration of methods, textbooks, or utilization of grammatical or rhetorical exercises, is that of motivation, for without adequate motivation of the right kind no class will enter with any zest into the performance of exercises to further their composition abilities. In the past, along with an undue proportion of all too often futile exercises, particularly in formal grammar, there has been little, if any, attempt to provide right motivation. Composition was just a school exercise in which pupils must engage if they were to be graded and graduated from the school. It entailed pluging along week after week doing those darned themes, scratching one's head for "something to write about" or complaining that "I can't write on that subject" to the teacher, and all the while not knowing in the least what it was all about -

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(1) adapted from HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE, R.W.Brown, Harvard University Press, 1922

with no least feeling that one was getting anywhere, in fact, with no intimation that there was anywhere "to get". Year in and year out, one wrote on pretty much the same old round of topics. But today, more and more fully, is the truth of what Pringle writes on this subject being recognized.

"If it is not the function of the teacher to manipulate the many ingenious and seemingly practical expedients for securing and handling oral and written compositions, what, then, is his function? Primarily and principally to arouse and direct the thoughts and feelings of his pupils, and by this means to control their ways of expressing themselves. This implies that from the first the mere technique of English expression must be subordinated to the spirit of the work. Composition is an art, and, as such, it should be approached in the spirit of play, play, however, that leads to much earnest effort. There should go into the work all the vigor that naturally characterizes play, and there should grow out of it all the joy and satisfaction that naturally accompany play. Perhaps there is no high school subject in which the spirit of the classroom is more important....

"In recent educational literature and discussion 'motivation' has been a word to conjure with. The psychology of all human situations demands an incentive. Educational effort at every level is vitally affected by anything that furnishes a remote or an immediate motive for effort. But as follows from our account of youthful characteristics, there is no period in life when worthy motives act with as

much vigor and certainty as in adolescence; and because of the limitations and difficulties already discussed, there is no line of high school effort in which natural and compelling motivation is more necessary than in teaching English composition.

"Effective motivation in composition includes at least two important principles: (a) the creation of a sufficiently moving force within, and (b) the supplying of helpful conditions without. The first is the psychological; the second is the social aspect of motivation. Neither can be neglected without ignoring the nature of high school pupils." (1)

High school pupils like to feel the thrill of achievement. It has too often been thought that after they had been dragooned into writing compositions they would by that very fact experience this thrill of having done something themselves. But about all they felt was a sense of relief that a disagreeable task had somehow been stumbled through. Two conditions the teacher must supply if this inner satisfaction is to accompany the performing of composition work. First, he must supply his students with definite knowledge of what achievement in writing craftsmanship involves, and demonstrate to them that it lies within their powers to at least approach this level

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(1) METHODS WITH ADOLESCENTS, R.W.Pringle, D.C.Heath, 1927

of achievement. The drill that has been described in connection with sentence construction, shows pupils what can be accomplished in that direction, gives them something definite in the way of craftsmanship to work towards, and at the same time supplies them with the means of approaching the level of this achievement. To no small extent, the work with precis also furnishes an ideal to aim at in the larger unit of the paragraph. Precis writing with prose is almost entirely concerned with single paragraphs, except in the upper years of the high school, and constant practice in sifting out the essential thought of a paragraph, with, of course, the guidance of the teacher, cannot but impress upon students the unity, coherence, and emphasis that go into the composing of a paragraph - an impression that hardly any amount of reading and discussion of theoretical principles, such as found in the traditional textbook on composition, could possibly make.

But merely to illustrate the nature of achievement in sentences and paragraphs, and to demonstrate the possibility of student accomplishment, is not enough. In the second place, teachers of composition must repeatedly supply at regular intervals some standard of measurement by which students may see for themselves what progress they are making. Nothing is more important in any branch of teaching than allowing pupils to see what progress they are making, and the keeping of a publicly posted record of this achievement. Graphs may very well serve this purpose.

In such a graph, the vertical coordinate may represent the length of sentences in number of words, and the horizontal the number of sentences. Underneath the horizontal coordinate, the number of sentences comprizing each paragraph may be bracketed. At each point in the graph, simple symbols to represent the various elements for which diagnosis is being made, may be placed. Such matters as the kind of sentence, whether simple, compound, or complex, or such elements of sentence structure as it may be desired to aim at at any given time, such as prepositional phrases, participial modifiers, adjective or adverbial clauses, and so on - these are the elements the frequency of which can also be diagnosed. Such graphs of student compositions may be compared with graphs of any desired type of writing, selected from magazines or books. This type of graph, with refinements of notation not included here, is used by Professor E.A.Post, of Boston University, in his classes in freshman composition.

The socialized recitation is another proved means of motivating composition work. The discussion here followed is that of S.A.Leonard.(1) Natural child-activities are suggestive of many subjects for expression. Of these, some are

a) hearing or reading stories

b) plays and games

c) construction or handiwork

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(1) ENGLISH COMPOSITION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM, S.A.Leonard, Houghton, Mifflin, 1917

d) observation of human and other activities or their realization from other people's accounts.

With such an array to choose from there is no excuse for assigning as composition subjects sterile dry material that does not represent to the children realized and vital experience.

Vital projects thus originated are of three types, based on the following motives:

a) the story-teller motive

b) the teacher motive (of which motive, known to every teacher through personal experience to be so valuable, almost nothing has in classroom teaching been made.)

c) the community-worker motive (which means real cooperation in meeting actual social needs)

And to these a fourth and very important motive may be added, that of

d) preserving or publishing what is especially well done.

The social group, the class, may serve as an agent in the development of expression by resolving itself into a critical audience for either unstudied talks of prevised compositions. The group by means of discussion may select interesting projects and canvass methods of carrying them out. And then it may criticize each child's work, commending and suggesting means of improvement. Such projects, Mr. Leonard concludes, should result in developed power of individual expression, and cooperative endeavor for common achievement.

D. Suggested types of composition assignment:

Roughly the types of assignments desirable for use in teaching composition group under three heads:

a) assignments designed to stimulate reflective thinking on the part of the students.

For this purpose topics put in the form of questions necessitating thinking through to a reasoned conclusion serve admirably. Topics involving a choice between alternative solutions also stimulate real thinking.

b) assignments that are problems. For such the following is a suggestion.

Your city, let us say, is faced with the problem confronting all growing cities, of best providing housing for its increasing school population. In particular, your city is faced with the problem of providing more space for high school students, and must decide between two plans of procedure. It must either continue its present policy of maintaining centrally located high schools giving sharply differentiated types of training, as classical, technical, and commercial; or it must depart from this policy and establish high schools offering a general curriculum in different sections of the city.

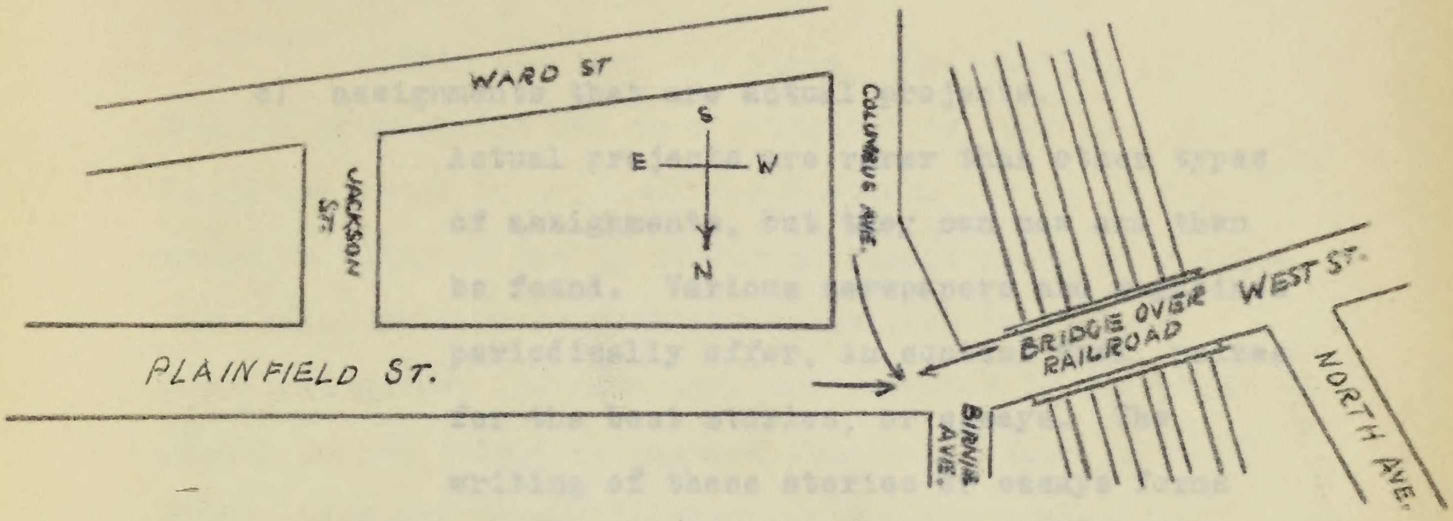
You explain this situation to the class, and then ask them to imagine themselves members of the school board, with this problem before them to decide. You suggest to them that expense, available sites, convenience, the most efficient meeting of educational needs, and so on, affect the solution of this problem. You will not, of course, receive solutions that would actually enable the school board to make a decision. But, if you give time enough for its preparation, the assignment will surprize you with its results. Some students will have called at the city hall for information. They will have visited the public library. They will have talked the matter over with their parents. They will have gone to great lengths, many of them, to reach a solution. Further interest may be added by having the class as a whole sit in judgment upon the results.

Another example of a worth-while type of assignment for twelfth-grade boys, at least, is given below.

Composition assignment for twelfth-grade,
and best confined to boys.

Step I. Preparation:

As the class is coming into the room, the teacher is placing on the board the accompanying diagram.



Having finished, he reads to the class two items from the morning paper, one a news item, and the other an editorial. The first tells briefly of a fatal automobile accident at the location given in the diagram on the board, which occurred the evening before in the manner indicated by the arrows. The editorial, after referring to the collision, calls to the reader's attention the alarming frequency with which such, or lesser, collisions take place at this point, and then proceeds, though without offering an concrete suggestions, to urge the responsible city authorities to take action in the immediate future to facilitate traffic at this place, and to remove once and for all the possible recurrence of such collisions.

The teacher then recounts for the benefit of the class several methods, widely used in different cities, of dealing with such a problem in traffic as this one. He speaks of stop-and-go lights, both the older type and the newer "electro-matic" type, of one-way traffic flow, and of circular movement of intersection traffic, and he suggests that possibly a combination of solutions might be applicable here.

Step II. Assignment:

The teacher then assigns for the next composition the working out of a solution for this traffic problem. He suggests that first they state clearly and briefly what the problem is, together with the difficulties that stand in the way of solving it, that second they propose possible solutions, that third they

develop each of these solutions sufficiently to be able to point out the advantages or difficulties attendant upon it, and that fourth, having selected one solution(or combination of solutions), they suppose it in force and then check it against the difficulties that they have previously listed. Finally, the teacher tells them that, though he strongly recommends their using diagrams, he insists equally strongly on their being only supplementary, that - in other words - the actual writing itself must be clear and complete.

c) assignments that are actual projects.

Actual projects are rarer than other types of assignments, but they can now and then be found. Various newspapers and magazines periodically offer, in contest form, prizes for the best stories, or essays. The writing of these stories or essays forms the very best kind of project for composition work. It is entered into voluntarily, evokes great interest, and provides a very fetching motive.

Another project, limited in its application to twelfth-grade, college-preparatory students, is that which involves a determination of what college to apply to for admittance. Plenty of time must, of course, be allowed for working this out. Pupils will send for catalogues, will consult with their teachers, their principal, their parents, and will consider their own individual needs.

Still another type of project assignment, one that also has to be voluntary, is writing for the school paper or magazine.

VI. Conclusion:

Within the last few years, the teaching of English composition has been subjected to, and is still being subjected to critical examination. It is in the position today of having to defend itself along with other curriculum studies against the accusation that it is given altogether too much time and emphasis in the high school course judged by results obtained. Such critical examination has forced teachers of English composition to look into their teaching to discover why it has in the past been so unproductive of tangible results. They have had to formulate new objectives in the light of the general revision of educational aims and objectives. They have had to eliminate from their teaching much that for generations they have come to regard with reverence as essential for logical completeness in language teaching. They have had to sacrifice most in the field of grammar, since it has been demonstrated that so much of it does not function in composition habits either in or out of school. In the knowledge of new objectives they have also had to add much in the way of rhetorical drill; they have had to scrap the traditional types of textbook; they have

had to provide adequate motivation; and they have had to rejuvenate and revise the kind of assignments made.

"English composition has been one of the least interesting subjects taught in the schools. (There has been no provision for) initial enthusiasm for composing. (This has been a formal matter) unrelated to his (the pupil's) personal need to express or communicate his feelings and ideas. The pupil has been forced to observe the rules and niceties of the English language without ever his being aware in any vital way of their use to him. The result has been the most formal and artificial of all the school studies.... Now, fortunately, we are asking our pupils to speak of the things they know in an intimate way.... We shall never thoroughly enrich or composition teaching until we accept the principle that the development of attitudes is as necessary as the development of an accurate comprehension of the varied world which we are to describe and discuss." (1)

This, in short, means that there has been taking place in the minds of progressive teachers, supervisors, principals, and superintendents a complete change of attitude, from the traditional one, toward the teaching of English composition in the high school.

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(1) Henry Suzzallo in preface to ENGLISH COMPOSITION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM, S.A.Leonard, Houghton, Mifflin, 1917

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